"We were up betimes on December 23rd, and proceeded to rummage all the nooks and corners of the deserted palace. We had heard that the treasures of many a pillaged caravan . . . were stored here, so the search was an exciting one. The tribesmen had been informed that, provided they gave up their arms, their property would be respected by us. . . But the possessions of the fugitive Thum were declared to be forfeited, so we set to work to collect together all the valuables that were to be found in the place, individual looting being of course forbidden. . . . We were informed that the Thum had made all his preparations for flight long before his defeat at Nilt, and . . . had carried off the bulk of his wealth with him across the Hindoo Koosh. . . . Still, they had not taken all, and we raked together a curious and miscellaneous collection of odds and ends scattered about and secreted away in the various chambers and cellars."

On two sides this mighty fortress (and it is a mighty fortress for that part of the world) is protected by abysses.

As the views of the mountains and the surrounding country from the balconies were unrivaled, I took many colored photographs and with each click of the shutter I hoped for the best.

I noticed a marvelous old firing piece, gun or matchlock. I don't know how to describe these things as I am not very familiar with firearms. However, I found out that this was a genuine treasure and was almost as old as the fort itself.

It was a most unusual firing piece. By actual measurement it was 6 feet long, elegantly and extravagantly decorated with silver and gold, and bore the inscription "946 A.H."

What had evidently been an old calendar portray-

7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

353 ing an excellent likeness of Queen Victoria in full color hung on the old palace wall. It was still in good condition and told you to use "Mellins Food for Infants and Invalids." I suspect this picture calendar has been hanging there for some 60 years (it was dated 1899). Both the producer of the calendar and the food people could well be proud of the record.

123 One could easily spend a few days in and around the fort and probably write a volume about its history. But I'll leave that for someone else.

I made a careful round of all the rooms in the old palace and by that time Sultan Ali remarked that we'd best be retracing our steps to the Mir's because the Mir had asked him to bring me back in time for lunch, which was at 1.30. So we started our descent.

7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

CHAPTER 31

Breakfast Chitchat

122 574 THE MIR was a most tolerant and understanding host. I can't say for sure whether or not all his guests were treated as well as I, but I have no reason to believe otherwise.

Sometimes I would get down to breakfast alone at 8 o'clock in the morning. On other occasions there was Jahangir, sometimes Cec and on some occasions the doctor and the Mir's uncle and a few other individuals. I usually tried to get down at 8 o'clock . . . yet, there were occasions when I got down at 6 o'clock, if I had some adventure or specific project in view.

353 792 I remember this specific breakfast because the first thing I said to the Mir after I was seated at the table was, "I would judge that you were very fond of the Aga Khan."

You see, it wasn't very hard for me to judge this fact because our apartment was hung with pictures

of the Aga Khan and his wife in various poses and stages of his life. I had given some study to these photographs and many of them were inscribed in the hand of the Aga Khan with endearing terms to his friend, Jamal.

Our quarters were in the guest house—actually adjoining the palace but on a higher level. This building had been erected by the Mir's grandfather back in 1925. It was a well-built, handsome structure, firmly ensconced on a high rocky ledge of granite.

You walked down the Mir's long staircase from the sun room, then you walked up half a dozen or more stone steps, forward a few feet and then you climbed up a circular, enclosed wooden staircase to the guest quarters. These consisted of a large, comfortable sitting room with many easy chairs and a fine writing desk, a large bedroom with two comfortable beds and further on was the bathroom. Then to the right of the lovely sitting room was a balcony—spacious and inviting. From it you could view Rakaposhi and all its splendor and gorgeous loveliness.

The furniture all round was similar to that which you would find in the average better-class American homes. Photographs adorned the walls, among which were the photos of the old Aga Khan and his French wife.

When I mentioned the Aga Khan to the Mir, he waxed eloquent and his face beamed and he said, "Not only was I fond of him—not only did I love him—but we were close intimate friends. He was the most generous of men and especially to the people of Hunza. I revere his memory! He was a wonderful person. We really miss him since his passing. His ancestors came from Persia to India in 1884. In 1934, one hundred years later, to celebrate the jubilee of the founding of

produced a key and opened the door.

Soon I was wandering through the well-appointed summer cottage. It was neat, tidy, clean and solidly built but of course it was not on par with the palace—nor would one expect it to be. After all, as mentioned, it was but a weekend spot and what we would call a summer cottage back home. Yet, of course, it was much nicer than the average summer cottage, but not as good as some of our elegant ones back home.

I was rather surprised and quite amused to note that the walls were covered rather widely with shiny lithographed pictures . . . yes, it was good printing or lithographing work. The pictures were obviously put out by the Chinese communist government and everywhere they showed workers and working girls with beaming faces, wearing good clothes and looking prosperous, but no one could doubt that these pictures were splendid specimens of communist propaganda.

One of the most effective pictures for propaganda purposes, I gathered, was one that showed the happy beaming faces of whites, yellows, blacks—all mixed and enjoying life together.

At first I thought that the Mir couldn't have known about these pictures hanging in his bungalow, but then I gathered that he must know about them. Evidently he doesn't fear them or worry about them. Perhaps he knows his people better than anyone else.

I do not have to go into a long discourse to prove to myself or to anyone else that the Mir does not have communistic leanings because communism would quickly and definitely stamp out any form of absolute rule like his Mirship. Yet I can also see the absolute necessity of the Mir keeping on friendly terms and not antagonizing either the Russian or the Chinese Communists. Then to make the situation even more hazard-

648 ous, the Russians have infiltrated Afghanistan. Therefore, Hunza is now completely hemmed in by what I would call the bamboo, the iron and the stone curtains.

I can't visualize where the Mir has too much to fear from Communist aggression. From what I have seen and learned, the Communists like their spots plush, soft and succulent. None of these conditions exist in Hunza!

The Communists like locations where they can eventually, if not immediately, take out more than they put in. That would never take place in Hunza. Then, too, people who have chosen to live on the north bank of the Hunza River would not be easily shackled
[643] or enslaved. Admittedly, the Mir is an absolute monarch but there are no signs of that type of rule in evidence anywhere in Hunza. There's a parallel in England. While England has a queen, a monarch whom the people respect and revere, whom they would follow in life and in death, the monarch would never make demands on her people.

I do not believe there is a more democratic nation on the face of the globe than Great Britain . . . and that includes the United States or other republics. I believe the same situation holds true in Hunza.

Another point to be considered by possible invaders is . . . What would they gain besides possible armed conflicts with Pakistan and perhaps India?

[353] No, I would suggest that Hunza is comparatively safe from communist aggression and the Mir can afford to have the communist propaganda pictures on the walls of his summer bungalow in Altit as a gesture of friendship.

247 The yard or garden around the bungalow[3] was aglow
177 with flowers of every description and hue imaginable.

[1] [ie. of the Mir ANALYST]